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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the second year of the Heman Street Preschool remained the same as they had been in the previous year: to provide experiences for preschool children which would increase their chances for later success in school and to serve as a training site where graduate students might learn to work effectively with preschool children and with other teachers and aides. The bases for curriculum decisions and the overall operating procedures remained essentially as they were the previous year. On the basis of the experience of the first year and in response to changed conditions a number of modifications were made in staffing pattern, curriculum, and daily operation. There were 50 children in the school. All but one lived in the area served by the Heman Street Elementary School. Data has been collected supporting the following statements: (1) The children enrolled in the Preschool have shown a small but consistent gain in Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test scores between pretest (administered in the fall) and posttest (administered in the late spring); (2) Low-scoring children gain more than others, the effect being greater than that to be expected from regression effects; and (3) Greater gains were shown by children receiving instruction as described in the Peabody Language Development Kit than by those receiving instruction in the Distar Language I Program. (For related document, see ED 057 917.) (Author/CK)

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REPORT

# THE HEMAN STREET PRESCHOOL 1971-72

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The preschool was a part of the Syracuse Laboratory for Innovators of Language-Centered Early Childhood Curricula conducted in the Heman Street School, East Syracuse, New York by the Reading and Language Arts Center of Syracuse University under provisions of a grant from the United States Office of Education, Bureau of Educational Personnel Development, Early Childhood Division.

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THE HEMAN STREET PRESCHOOL

1971-72

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Ann C. Howe, Director of Preschool
Carolyne R. Pfeifer, Coordinator of Preschool

EPDA Participants

Ellsworth Berget
Lucinda Briggs
Rosemary Broccoli
Jack Burtch
John Helfeldt
Anne Jack
Margaret Justice
Virginia Kroeber
Robert Lemons
Emma Rembert
Jon Shapiro
Suzanne Simon
Beverly Templeton

Teaching Assistants

Dorothy Barilla
Nancy Ann Cramer
Sophie Moziak
Barbara Swortfiguer
Cynthia Vallier
Dorothy Woyciesjes

## PURPOSES

The purposes of the Heman Street Preschool remained the same as they had been in the previous year* to provide experiences for preschool children which would increase their chances for later success in school and to serve as a training site where graduate students might learn to work effectively with preschool children and with other teachers and aides. This was the second year of operation of the preschool as a training center. The bases for curriculum decisions and the overall operating procedures remained essentially as they were the previous year and are described in the Report for 1970-71. On the basis of the experience of the first year and in response to changed conditions a number of modifications were made in staffing pattern, curriculum, and daily operation.

## THE CHILDREN

There were fifty children in the preschool. When school began in September their ages ranged from 44 to 48 months. All but one lived in the area served by the Heman Street Elementary School. For most of the year there were 27 children in the morning class and 23 in the afternoon class. The classes were formed on the basis of the distance the children lived from the school. The "morning children" were transported to and from school on a bus which also transported the kindergarten children; the "afternoon children" walked. The area served by the school is small; there are no obvious differences in the homes or neighborhoods from which the "walkers" and the "bus children" came. In fact, the area is really one neighborhood.

So far as is known there were only two or three eligible children who were not enrolled. In each case, the decision not to enroll the child was made by the parents.

At first acquaintance the children of the Heman Street Preschool do not seem to be disadvantaged and many of them, in fact, are not. "Disadvantaged" is, in any case, an ambiguous term and what seems to be a disadvantage to one person is thought to be a normal condition of existence to another. However, it is generally recognized now that school achievement is positively correlated with socioeconomic status; that is, that the lower the socioeconomic status of the family the lower the school achievement of the children is likely to be. For this reason it is interesting to note that more than half of the parents of the Preschool children work in semiskilled or unskilled occupations; more men are employed as truck drivers than in any other single occupation. Many of the parents may be characterized as the working poor; very few are unemployed but many are employed in jobs which bring low wages. They are gas station attendants, clerks in grocery stores, operators of heavy machinery. The mothers who work are employed as barmaids, waitresses, or, in some cases, beauticians or factory workers. Less than half the fathers but somewhat more than half the mothers are high school graduates; only four fathers and two mothers have attended college for a year or more. Many of the families identify themselves with an ethnic group; all of them are white.

*See Howe, Preliminary Report. Heman Street Preschool Accession No. PS005232 (ED057917)



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## THE TEACHERS

The teachers were graduate students enrolled in the EPDA Early Childhood Program at Syracuse University and women of the community who had been trained as teaching assistants (aides) in the Project the previous year. Each of the EPDA graduate students served as a teacher for two months. Only two of the students had had previous experience with preschool children and none had assumed full teaching responsibility in a preschool program. Five of the students were men. The teaching assistants worked in the program during the entire year and provided continuity as the graduate students phased in and out. The students and assistants worked under the direction and supervision of two EPDA staff members.

## ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

The morning children arrived at 8:30 AM and left at 11:00 AM. The afternoon children arrived at noon and left at 2:30 PM. There were two teachers (graduate students) and three aides for the morning class; they arrived at 8:00 AM and stayed until noon. There were one teacher and three aides for the smaller afternoon class who arrived at 11:00 AM and stayed until 3:00 PM. Each team of teachers was in the school for one and one half hours longer than the children. There was one hour (from 11:00 AM to noon) when all teachers and no children were present. This time was used for planning, preparation, and evaluation. School was cancelled on alternate Fridays to allow time for workshops, planning, evaluation, and setting the rooms in order.

## TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EPDA PARTICIPANTS

The objectives and methods of the training program for participant-trainees were similar to those of the previous year. During 1971-72 each participant (except two who were in the final year of doctoral programs) had direct experience in the Preschool for at least two months. During this time they were responsible for planning and executing the Preschool program within the guidelines established for the program and under the supervision of senior staff members. The participants and aides worked as teams in planning, execution, and evaluation with the participants as team leaders.

Participants with previous experience with young children were chosen for the first period. Prior to the opening of school they worked with the Preschool Director in planning the program and in arranging materials and equipment in the rooms to be used by the children. Participants whose practicum experience came later in the year had opportunities for guided observation and orientation in the Preschool before assuming responsibility.

Objectives. The training program was planned to provide experiences and guidance which would lead to competence in the following tasks:

1. Program planning within predetermined guidelines
2. Leading children through daily activities with a minimum of verbal and other disapproval of children's behavior
3. Planning and execution of small-group guided learning activities for acquisition of specific concepts or abilities

4. Use of DISTAR and/or Peabody Language Development materials
5. Use of manipulative materials with individual or small group to teach specific concepts or skills
6. Initiation of and informal guidance of children in block construction, sociodramatic play, and use of outdoor play equipment
7. Direction and supervision of use of expressive materials
8. Leading group in songs and games
9. Planning field trips and using experiences as basis for further learning
10. Use of informal means to evaluate individual children's progress
11. Administration and scoring of standardized tests

Methods. The principal methods used in guiding the trainees toward competence were modeling, direct instruction followed by observation, and workshops.

Modeling refers to a process in which the trainee observes the trainer perform a task and then tries to model his own performance after that of the trainer. In our program the purpose was not to force the trainee to imitate the style and mannerisms of the trainer but to help him acquire, as soon as possible, techniques which would allow him to work with children with ease and confidence. He could then integrate these methods and techniques with his own preferences and ideas to form his own unique teaching styles. This process was used for training the participants to become effective in guiding children's learning systematically and interactively in small groups. The process could be used to particular advantage in this program because each teacher was required to lead three similar guided learning periods, one after the other, each day. When the training period began, the trainee observed while the Preschool Director or Coordinator taught one group, then the trainees taught the second and third groups. Or the trainer taught the first two groups, or the first and third. In all cases the trainee observed an experienced teacher guide the learning of the children and then, immediately afterward, was himself observed as he carried out the same task.

Workshops were used in training to give the trainees the same kind of experiences with materials and activities which the children had. Experiences with many kinds of art materials, musical instruments, songs, games, and block building were provided.

When direct instruction was used as a training method it was followed by observation and feedback to the trainee.

Team Teaching. There were two teams of teachers, one for the morning class and one for the afternoon class. Each team consisted of one or two participant-trainees and three teaching assistants (aides). Each participant-trainee spent two months in the Preschool; the assistants remained for the entire year. There were certain difficulties inherent in this situation. The team leader, who was always a participant-trainee, was often less experienced and skillful than the assistants. By the end of the year the teaching assistants were sometimes acting as trainers of their team leaders. Another difficulty was the necessity for the assistants to learn to work with new team leaders every two months as a new group of participant-trainees began practicum experience in the Preschool. The teaching assistants, who were mature women and mothers from the community, often showed a remarkable degree of patience and cooperation. Their concern for the children usually made it possible for them to find ways to work cooperatively. The experience

of working in a team situation placed demands on the participant-trainees which some of them found difficult to meet. In spite of the difficulties of the situation we believe that this is an important and necessary part of the training of future workers in early childhood education. It is unlikely that any of them will find themselves in a closed classroom; unless they learn to work cooperatively with aides and assistants they will not be able to make full use of the talents and strengths of these workers.

The various tasks and responsibilities of the Preschool program were assigned for two week periods and rotated according to a prearranged scheme. This gave all teachers an opportunity to gain experience in all areas of the program. The teams met every day before and after the class sessions and came together for a four-hour workshop twice a month.

## CURRICULUM OF THE PRESCHOOL

Objectives. The program was planned to guide the children's development in language acquisition, cognitive processes, and social competence. A list of objectives is given in the Appendix. The list was used as a guide in planning and was not taken to be all-inclusive. It was understood by the teachers that each child should be encouraged and stimulated to increase his competence in all three areas.

Learning Activities. The curriculum was planned to include both structured guidance in language and cognitive development and opportunities for self initiated play with a wide variety of objectives and materials. The daily program included three periods of 15-20 minutes each in which all children, in groups of 4 to 6, participated in guided learning activities. There were two periods planned for language development and one for cognitive development. We are all aware that development of language and cognition cannot be so neatly compartmentalized; in the program described here these distinctions indicate a shift in emphasis from one period to another rather than an attempt to separate thought and language development.

The DISTAR Language I Program (1) was used in one class and the Peabody Language Development Kit, Level P, (2) in the other as bases for one of the guided learning periods. These commercially avaialble curriculum materials were used because it was thought that a sequenced intstructional program in which children would attend to and produce language in a systematic way would lead to acquisition of basic rules of language and a higher level of general language competence and that it would be impossible for informally trained teaching assistants and inexperienced teachers to produce such a program. It was also thought that experience in the use of the methods and materials of these carefully planned and theoretically based programs would be of value to the participant-trainees. The DISTAR program makes extensive use of behavior modification techniques; the Peabody Program uses the traditional nursery school methods and materials to serve the purposes of carefully sequenced language objectives. The teachers were allowed a

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(1) Engleman, S., Osborn, J., and Engleman, T., DISTAR Language I, Science Research Associates, Chicago, 1969

(2) Peabody Language Development Kit, Level P, American Guidance Service, Circle Pines, Minn.

certain amount of flexibility in carrying out these programs but the essential elements in methods and objectives were adhered to. The small size of the groups made it possible to recognize and take into account individual differences.

The second period devoted to language development was more informal and allowed the teachers more opportunities to use their own ideas, teaching preferences, and styles. This period was used as a time for children (in groups of 4 to 6) to attend to a story or description of an event and then express their own thoughts or feelings evoked by the story. Most often a story was read or told from a book which also contained attractive pictures. Films were also used; stories were sometimes told with the aid of a flannel board and cut-outs; nursery rhymes and poems were used from time to time; one teacher used this time by having the children act out familiar stories. The children were always encouraged to talk about what they had heard or seen with the expectation that this would promote growth in the ability to use language in everyday situations. During the last six weeks of the year this period was changed for the most able children; at this point they moved into pre-reading activities which included identification of letters of the alphabet, printing their own names, and identifying letters with sounds.

The third guided learning period was devoted to activities planned to facilitate cognitive development. These activities included sorting, grouping, classifying and ordering objects; recognizing, copying, and forming patterns of objects, sounds, and symbols; building number concepts through the manipulation of objects; observing the habits and reactions of animals and plants and observing, thinking about and talking about other natural phenomena. In some cases an activity was sequenced and planned for several days or a week at a time. The performances of the children were evaluated and noted so that the sequence could be picked up and followed later. In other cases, such as growing plants, the events had their own sequence and the role of the teacher was to encourage close observation and facilitate understanding of natural processes.

Attendance at the three guided learning periods was not optional; all children were assigned to a group and were expected to participate.

Self-Initiated Play. An equal, or longer, period of time was scheduled for self-initiated play when children were free to choose what they wished to do. The available choices included housekeeping toys, dress-up clothes, large and small blocks and accessories, wooden vehicles, a water table, such expressive materials as clay, finger paint, tempera, play-dough and others, work bench, puzzles, games, many table toys, books, pictures. Not all of these were available everyday but there were always many choices. Some days there were special activities, such as cooking, making Christmas decorations, or a field trip. During this time the teachers were adtive in encouraging constructive play, facilitation peer interaction, suggesting alternatives and guiding the activities of individuals or groups who needed guidance. The teachers tried to give guidance without dominating the activities. Children who could find things to do which absorbed their attention and energy were left alone with their tasks; those who wandered about without settling down to anything were casually guided toward some activity which would engage their attention. A teacher often started a group out by being a participant in the game or activity and gradually withdrew as the children learned to carry on alone.

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The schedule of a typical morning is given below:

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:30 - 8:50 | Arrival, greetings, removal of outdoor clothing, play with puzzles, games, table toys, small blocks. Children free to choose among things available in the room. |
| 8:50 - 9:00 | Group gathers in another room; comes together for one or two songs, small groups formed |
| 9:00 - 9:50 | Guided learning in small groups |
| 9:50 - 10:00 | Total group gathers for songs, games, musical instruments or other group activity |
| 10:00 - 10:50 | Free play, snack (optional), art activities, special projects (optional). Outdoors in good weather |
| 10:50 - 11:00 | Preparation for departure; departure |

The afternoon schedule was the same.

Evaluation. Evaluation took place on several levels and for different purposes. The learning activities were evaluated daily on a subjective basis by the persons carrying them out. These daily assessments of each activity on the basis of children's attention, interest, and attainment of the objectives of the activity were entered in the plan book and were available for reference.

The progress of individual children was evaluated by means of a checklist which referred to the objectives in the list previously mentioned. The checklist was used for all children. At the end of the year these checklists were made available to the teacher who will have the children in kindergarten next year. In addition to the checklist, a notebook was kept in which each child's general progress and particular problems were noted. This was used as a basis for team decisions regarding the activities thought appropriate for each child. An effort was always made to guide each child into activities which would provide a basis for further learning and development.

Two standardized tests were administered during the year. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), Form A, was administered to all children during the second week of school in September and again in May. There were 46 children from whom both scores were obtained. Results are summarized in Tables I and II.

Table I
Comparison of Pre- and Posttest I.Q. Scores on PPVT

| | N | Pre | | Post | | Diff. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | mean | s.d. | mean | s.d. | |
| A.M. Boys | 14 | 99.6 | 12.3 | 105 | 9.4 | +5.4 |
| Girls | 10 | 101.6 | 10.7 | 97 | 11.6 | -4.6 |
| Total | 24 | 100.4 | 11.6 | 102 | 10.8 | +1.6 |
| P.M. Boys | 14 | 99.5 | 16.5 | 107.7 | 11.2 | +8.1 |
| Girls | 8 | 99.1 | 22 | 105.9 | 10.9 | +6.8 |
| Total | 22 | 99.5 | 18.8 | 107.1 | 11.2 | +7.6 |
| Total Group | 46 | 99.9 | 15.1 | 104.3 | 11.0 | +4.4 |

Table II
Frequencies of Pre- and Posttest I.Q. Scores on PPVT

| Scores | September | May |
|---|---|---|
| 60-69 | 1 | 0 |
| 70-79 | 3 | 0 |
| 80-89 | 8 | 3 |
| 90-99 | 8 | 13 |
| 100-109 | 14 | 18 |
| 110-119 | 10 | 5 |
| 120 and above | 2 | 7 |

The results for the total group are similar to those obtained the previous year when the initial mean score for four-year olds was 99.5 and the score at posttest was 104.3. Another similarity is the decrease in the number of children with scores below ninety between the initial and final testing. Our experience with the children and contacts with parents suggest the possibility that these low-scoring children had had little attention from adults who assumed a teaching role; i.e., their parents or caretakers had not conversed with them, encouraged them to attend to pictures, listen to stories, learn names of objects or any of the other things included in the "hidden curriculum" of the middle class home. When the children were brought into contact with the learning environment of the Preschool they were able to assimilate it and scored significantly higher on posttest. On the other hand, children who had had better learning environments at home and who scored close to or above the mean on entry, did not make large gains in PPVT scores. This is one of several indications that the program was of more benefit to children whose development was below average on entry than it was to those who were more advanced.

The second standardized test which was used was the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA). It was noted previously that the DISTAR Language I program served as the basis of language instruction for the morning class and the Peabody Language Development Kit, Level P was used with the afternoon class. Each group had a minimum of four 15-20 minute periods per week for eight months. At the end of this time the five subtests of the ITPA described below were selected for administration to a random sample from each class.

Auditory-Vocal Association. This test uses verbal analogies of increasing difficulty to tap the child's ability to relate one concept to another when the concepts are presented orally.

Visual-Motor Association. This test taps the child's ability to relate concepts presented visually. The child is presented a stimulus picture and four others; he is asked to choose the picture which "goes with" the stimulus.

Auditory Sequential Memory. This tests the child's ability to reproduce from memory sequences of digits increasing in length from two to eight.

Visual Sequential Memory. This tests the child's ability to reproduce from memory sequences of non-meaningful figures increasing in length from two to eight.

Grammatic Closure. This is a test of low conceptual difficulty which assesses the child's ability to respond automatically to frequently heard verbal expressions. The child is presented with part of an expression and is required to close the gap by supplying the missing part.

The scaled scores of the two groups on each of these subtests are given in Table III.

Table III
Scaled Scores of Two Classes on ITPA Subtests

| Subtest | DISTAR (N 8) mean | s.d. | Peabody (N 10) mean | s.d. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Auditory-Visual Association | 35 | 31 | 39 | 6.1 | 1.58 |
| Visual-Motor Association | 32 | 3.8 | 38 | 7.1 | 2.23* |
| Auditory Memory | 39 | 7.1 | 36 | 6.1 | 0.97 |
| Visual Memory | 42 | 3.6 | 40 | 6.7 | 0.94 |
| Grammatic Closure | 35 | 4.3 | 41 | 6.8 | 2.06 |

* $p < .05$

The data indicate that the children who had been in the DISTAR class scored slightly higher on the memory tasks and the children who had been in the Peabody class scored higher on the conceptual tasks and the test of the knowledge of patterns of common usage, but only in one case is there a difference in scores which is statistically significant. If these data do indeed point to a real kifference in outcome between the two programs, it appears that the more informal, less behaviorally oriented Peabody program is more effective in increasing the ability to make conceptual relationships. It should be noted that Peabody (PM) group also made greater gains in PPVT scores as shown in Table I.

Summary. The Heman Street Preschool has now been in operation as a training site for two years. The emphasis has been on formative rather than summative evaluation; that is, the main effort has been to evaluate what we were doing on a continuing, often subjective, basis. However, we have collected data which allow us to make the following statements:

1. The children enrolled in the Preschool have shown a small but consistent gain in PPVT scores between pretest (administered in the fall) and posttest (administered in the late spring).
2. Low-scoring children gain more than others, the effect being greater than that to be expected from regression effects.
3. Greater gains were shown by children receiving instruction as described in the Peabody Language Development Kit than by those receivibg instruction in the Distar Language I Program.

In addition we have shown that it is possible for paraprofessionals and student-trainees to execute a program focused on langugae and cognitive development when there is time for planning and evaluation and when there is continuous, supportive supervision.

## Appendix

### Objectives--Preschool 1971-72

**Language**

a. Oral

1. Gives own name upon request
2. Makes requests verbally
3. Joins in songs
4. Converses with other children
5. Develops vocabulary to name:
   a. animals
   b. colors
   c. foods
   d. parts of the body
   e. clothing
   f. objects in room
   g. toys
   h. shapes
6. Uses verbs to describe action
7. Uses adjectives (small, large, hard, soft, high, low, etc.)
8. Uses adverbs (fast, slow, softly, loudly, up, down, etc.)
9. Demonstrates understanding of prepositions (in, on, under, over, beside, etc.)
10. Describes events in correct time sequence

b. Reading Readiness

1. Follows story by pictures, when read to
2. Answers questions about story when read to
3. Recounts story upon request
4. Handles book right side up, left to right, front to back
5. Gives rhyming words
6. Makes increasingly fine visual discrimination
7. Recognizes own name
   a. first
   b. second
8. Recognizes letters of alphabet
9. Prints own name

**Cognitive**

1. Matches patterns (increasingly complex)
2. Reproduces patterns (increasingly complex)
3. Recognizes equivalent sets (1-10)
4. Recognizes one set as greater than or less than another
5. Names sets (1-10)
6. Counts (1-10)
7. Classifies objects according to:
   a. one attribute
   b. two attributes

**Social**

1. Puts on and takes off own outdoor clothing
2. Follows routine of the day
3. Toilets independently
4. Snacks independently
5. Attends to teacher in teacher-led activity
6. Waits short time if necessary or requested
7. Works alone on puzzles, games, etc.
8. Works with one or more children on block construction
9. Plays cooperatively in housekeeping corner
10. Attends to needs of animals in room